

God's Sufficiency for Godly Living

Lesson 5

Old Testament Examples of God's Sufficiency

By

Bob Hoekstra

Brought to you by

[Blue Letter Bible](http://BlueLetterBible.org)

BlueLetterBible.org

In this fifth session of our study through God's sufficiency, we shall consider "Old Testament Examples of God's Sufficiency." The believer is called to godly living, but always arising is the question of where the believer comes by the resource to live the life to which God calls him. As we have seen (and will continue to see), a life of growth in Christ-likeness can only come about through drawing upon God's sufficiency for godly living. Throughout the Old Testament, God presents us with examples of those saints who lived by faith, those who looked to God to be their sufficiency. These were driven to Him by the high and holy standards of the law of God; and by their own insufficiency to fulfill such a law. Yet these were also drawn to God by His mercy and grace and by His sufficient resources. These Old Testament saints will be another example illustrating life by God's sufficiency as described in 2 Corinthians 3:5.

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as
being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God. (2
Corinthians 3:5)

This particular seminar of six lessons is a follow-up from the Growing in the Grace of God series and really looks at the same issue—living by the grace of God—from a different perspective. In that prior series, it was demonstrated thoroughly that humility and faith are critical in living by the grace of God. “God gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). It is hearts of humility that draw upon the grace of God. Still more, it is by faith as well that God's grace is met. “By faith in Jesus we have access into this grace in which we stand” (Romans 5:2). Paul speaks, in 2 Corinthians 3:6, of those who are made sufficient as servants of the new covenant—that is, those who live not by their own sufficiency but by God's sufficiency. These are those who humbly agree that they are not sufficient of themselves to consider anything as coming from themselves. But though the believer does not have sufficient resources in himself, sufficient resources can be made his.

As the believer draws upon the sufficient resources of God in humble faith, it is the grace of God that flows in and through his heart and life. This lesson is a survey of those of the Old Testament who really lived in that manner. These men lived by the sufficiency of God through faith in Him. The only difference really between them and the present-day Christian is that they saw Christ in promises while those living today look back to an accomplished event. And yet, in either case, it is all by faith. As the author of Hebrews says, the saints of old looked at the outline of the plan in shadow form. Now in Christ, believers have the substance of the things for which the Old Testament saints had hoped. While grace is more abundantly available to us than it ever was to them, there are still men of old who are great examples of a life dedicated to trusting upon God's sufficiency for godly living.

Abraham Believing the Promises of God

Abraham is known in the New Testament as the father of all the faithful. Though Abraham struggles with his faith, God continues to hold the patriarch in His hand guiding him and caring for him. At one point, Abraham is having doubts that the heir God had promised him would ever come. God comforts the man, reiterating His promise.

And behold, the word of the Lord came to Abraham, saying,
"This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from
your own body shall be your heir." Then He brought him outside
and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you
are able to number them." And He said to, "So shall your
descendants be." And he believed in the LORD, and He
accounted it to him for righteousness. (Genesis 15:4-6)

Abraham's temptation was to look at His own sufficient resources, lacking though they were, and to attempt to fulfill what God had promised of his own power. Abraham looked at Eliezar, the slave in his household, and feared that because Abraham and Sarah had failed to birth an heir perhaps this servant would be his heir. God promised an heir, through whom would come a great nation and through that nation all the world would be blessed. Through this immediate heir would be the Seed that would be Messiah.

On another occasion, Abraham again fears for the integrity of God's plan and begins to work out of his own sufficiency. Abraham and his wife, Sarah, devise a plan involving planned infidelity with Hagar, Sarah's handmaiden. So results Ishmael, a product of man's ingenuity and man's sufficiency. Matters like this are not an assistance to God. God, being omnipotent, does not need help in accomplishing that which He sets out to accomplish. Man is arrogant to think he is going to help God when it is only God who can help man. God is not needy; man is. God is not insufficient; man is.

So despite Abraham's worries, God reassures him bringing him outside to view the stars. God promises on His own name that Abraham would be given seed that would bring forth a nation as great in number as the stars in the heavens. An innumerable host would be the family of Abraham. And Abraham believes in the Lord. He trusts the Lord. He recognizes God as the one who is sufficient for all things. And God accounts that to Abraham as righteousness. And so it is with the believer today. The believer trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom there is the promise of salvation.

Ultimately, Abraham receives the gospel in the promises of Genesis 12:3 and through Him all the nations of the world are blessed. He, living roughly four thousand years ago, expected someone to come who would take care of the needs of all, including himself. Today though, believers look back in trust in that same saviour. Paul makes it clear, in Romans 4, that just as David and Abraham were justified by faith, so are all believers justified. All who ever come to the Lord, come by faith. Men come to know the True and Living God by depending upon the word of the Lord, the promises of God. God accounts faith in Him as righteousness. God considers them righteous who believe in Him.

This is God's work in the believer today. He promises life in the Gospel, a man believes it, and God deems him righteous. All of this is based, of course, upon the work of Christ on the behalf of His sheep. So then, it is God who is sufficient for righteousness, not man. And Abraham discovered that sufficiency by believing the promises of God.

Joshua and Caleb Trusting God for the Land

Of course, Abraham is not the only example we see of saints who believe the promises of God. In the book of Numbers, God has promised to deliver the land of Canaan into the hands of the Israelites as an inheritance. Joshua and Caleb have just returned from the spying out the land; it is still filled with Canaanite inhabitants and though these two trust for God's provision, the other ten spies express fear and doubt.

But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes.
(Numbers 14:6)

The two faithful men of God tear their clothes in sorrowful anguish because they had just heard the majority report from the ten other spies who went into the land. The ten had given a negative report, assenting to the fact that the land was great (the grapes are huge and there flows milk and honey), but protesting entrance into the land due to fear of its inhabitants (giants living in huge walled cities). The ten spies declared there was no way Israel could take the land. Joshua and Caleb hear this report and they tear their clothes. They are ripping their clothes even as their hearts are ripping in contrition and pain to hear such a message of doubt against the promises of God.

These are the people of God. They are promised the land of Canaan by God Himself. Joshua and Caleb were going to stand on that promise. These two are those who will stake their hope on the sufficiency of God Himself.

And they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. "If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them."

(Numbers 14:7-9)

The report of Joshua and Caleb is right in the heart of the will of God. These men are looking to God's sufficiency rather than man's self-sufficiency. They realized that taking the land did not depend upon the strength of the nation of Israel, on the numbers of the Israelites, or upon the

tactics of the Israelite strategists. According to such things, the Israelites would certainly be no match for such forces. But the Lord had promised it to them. And the Lord was going to give it to them. And these two men believed the Lord. Joshua and Caleb, entrusting God for the land, are great examples of living by drawing upon, depending upon, counting upon God's sufficiency.

Moses Pointing to the Lord for the Battle

Here is another great example of living by the sufficiency of God. In giving direction to the Israelites in their future battles amongst the peoples who would soon stand against them, Moses points to the Lord for victory in the battle.

When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle that the priest shall approach and speak to the people. And he shall say to them, "Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them for the Lord your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you." (Deuteronomy 20:1-4)

Note carefully, this is nothing like the modern "power of positive thinking" issue in which people are encouraged that the battle is first won in the mind by affirming oneself and claiming the victory beforehand. The modern society says, "Do not allow yourself to be frightened! Just think

victory! Think positive thoughts!” Moses’ words to his people are nothing like that. He explains that these upcoming battles would not be like them against a fortress of Goliaths. It would not be nomadic Israel waging war against the mighty city of Jericho. It was going to be a fortress of Goliaths and mighty Jericho falling before the strength of almighty God. The battle did not belong to Israel, but to the Lord. If He commanded the battle, then victory would be the only possible result. It is God who is sufficient for the things impossible to men. And Moses’ pointing to the Lord for the battle is a great example of living by the sufficiency of God. There are battles set forth daily for every believer in the Christian life.

And life in the promised land is a picture of life for the believer today. The Christian does not look to the promise of a physical, literal land like Israel did. For the believer today, the land is heavenly living—living in the spiritual promises of God. The promised land is a picture of Christian life. The promised land and entering in is a type of the abundant victorious Christian life, a life every believer is called to live here and now.

And so, the believer faces battles daily. He faces daily struggles against giants and strongholds, things that would hinder him from inheriting the fullness of the spiritual blessing of Christ. And yet, no believer needs fear such foes or circumstances for the Lord fights for His people. He can be relied upon to the uttermost. He is sufficient for the battle that He has laid before His children. And it is from His adequate resources that the believer is to draw upon by faith and dependence in order to gain the victory.

David Confessing the Lord as His Comprehensive Resource

Perhaps the richest example in the Old Testament of a man relying wholly upon the all-sufficient arm of the Lord is King David. Ruling Israel approximately one thousand years after God's

covenant with Abraham, David confesses the Lord as his comprehensive resource. David was king over all Israel and yet, was God still the only one the king relied upon to sustain him.

I will love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation. (Psalm 18:1-2)

Note the words of David's heart: the Lord is a rock, strength, deliverer, salvation, and stronghold. But note closer, David is sure to describe God as *his* rock, *his* strength, *his* deliverer, *etc.*, because of his personal relationship of faith in the Lord. "The Lord is my strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God in whom I will trust." The Lord is all of these things and He will be revealed as all of these things to the believer so long as the believer walks in dependence and faith upon the Lord.

Everyone needs strength. The Christian life is a battle. God does not expect the believer to have sufficient strength of himself. Man is limited by design that God can be glorified when the believer declares boldly in faith, "The Lord is my strength! I rest upon His sufficient strength."

All men need a rock to stand on. This world is sinking sand. All around people are sinking. The only place of stability upon which to stand is the Lord. The Lord is the only stable rock of foundation to be found. The believer stands upon Him. The believer stands upon His promises. Despite the danger of the world at large, where warfare rages on all sides and strife exists in every corner, the believer is granted a mighty fortress to hide inside. By faith the believer can say, "The Lord is my fortress. He shall camp around me. He shall protect me."

This is a beautiful example of someone living with God as his sufficiency. God was David's comprehensive resource. He declared that it was in God that he would put his trust. And that is how the believer draws upon the sufficient resources of God. God's children depend upon Him and He supplies all that is needed for their lives of godliness.

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The
Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm
27:1)

The world is a frightful place. Dreadful things happen everywhere. There are people around the world paralyzed by fear. Fear wants to strike the believer wherever he lives as well. This is a dark world and it is hard to know what is coming for the darkness. But there is a light. There is a saving protection. Rescue is available. This is the Christian confession: "the Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? If God is for us, who do we have to be afraid of?"

Though the world, the flesh, and the devil all stand fast against the believer, in truth, they are but paper tigers for they can do nothing against the believer who has the Lord at his side. God never expected His children to be able to handle all these things on their own. He happily offers them His strength and power. But still, He calls the believer to look to Him in faith. He is right there to take care of the issues. He is the light to shine in the darkness. He is the believer's salvation. He shall rescue His child from daily trials. Even as He rescued the believer from sin and death at the point of salvation, so too does He rescue that same believer from the circumstances of life.

That is indicative of the life of David. When he trusts in the Lord, David is a mighty example of living by the sufficiency of God. Whenever David lives by his own sufficiency, he gets into major trouble. He tumbles into the pits of womanizing, adding wife to wife, and then takes another man's wife and covers his sin by murdering her husband. Yet even then he becomes a good example because all mankind stumbles and falls; and as David throws himself on the mercy of God, so too does the believer. David does not justify himself and cast blame upon others or upon the circumstances about him. He does not blame Bathsheba for bathing where he might see her. Rather, David takes responsibility for his sin and throws himself before God's mercy. Both Psalm 32 and Psalm 51 show vividly his broken heart. And so he pleads the mercy of God, confessing the depth of his sin. And in response, God cleanses David and restores him.

In Psalm 36, David again confesses the Lord as his comprehensive resource.

How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the
children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.
They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house,
and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. For
with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light.
(Psalm 36:7-9)

Here David speaks of the loyal, steadfast love of the Lord. God is always lovingly for—not against—His children once they put their faith in Him. He offers a faultless shelter and protection, here described as His wings. Yet His people are not just protected; they are also satisfied. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of His house.

The world promises riches untold. But its gold is tarnished and limited. The only abundantly satisfied ones are those who draw upon the fullness of the house of the Lord. Jesus said, "I came that you might have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Christ did not die to grant His people a stockpile of trinkets but bountiful measures of love, peace, joy, faithfulness, meekness, gentleness, and self-control. And the Lord gives His children to drink from the river of His pleasures. Nothing is more pleasing than a life lived by the river of life, with the Holy Spirit pouring out the resources of God to a trusting heart.

From God is the fountain of life. Too many Christians, though Christians because they found eternal life in Christ through faith, go through life day by day according to a prescribed ritual developed over years. Too many Christians are in this position of inadequacy. Too many believe they can develop a life for God. Too many follow a self-motivated path of self-sufficiency. And while this may show good devotion, it lacks severely a biblical wisdom.

Jeremiah called God the fountain of living waters. God does not want His children to develop lives dedicated to Him on their own. He is the fountain of life. As a believer focuses upon the Lord, abundant life flows naturally from God and into the believer. Then, without trying, the believer naturally pours forth for the Lord's glory and service. There is hardly a larger issue for a Christian, once saved. The believer must not try to develop a life for God through planning and discipline—that is only the power of man living by his own sufficiency. It can never be adequate. Rather the believer should seek only God and allow Him to develop a life of abundance in the believer. This flows naturally from God through faith. This grace then pours out to touch others for His glory and honor.

David saw where life came from. “For with You is the fountain of life. In Your light we see light.” The only way believers can see their path through this dark world is by the light of the Lord shining out of His word and into Christians’ hearts and minds as they walk. He is the believer’s comprehensive resource.

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on
His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall
give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord,
trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. (Psalm 37:3-5)

Trust in the Lord, and do good. For the believer to do good in any true sense, that good must originate from a trust and dependence upon the Lord. *Dwell in the land.* Just as the children of Israel occupied a physical, literal land in the time of David, so too does the New Testament believer occupy his own promised country. A heavenly land with foundations built and established by the hands of God. The believer dwells there living by the promises of God, feeding upon His faithfulness. By faith, the child of the Lord ought to let his nurturing and nourishment come from the faithfulness of God. Such a life, feeding upon the faithfulness of God, will result in an increasingly faithful, reliable believer—one well established in His word. Because the believer is not drawing upon his own resources, but upon the unlimited resources of God, his works will be righteous and powerful and lasting.

Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. The flesh naturally applies this truth selfishly and apart from the context of the presentation of Scripture. It imagines that God intends to grant the every wish of any who delight in the Lord. The fact is that such an attitude is not delighting in the Lord but only delighting in material desires. Man is

created to serve God before serving his own wants. The believer should never approach God as if to use Him. This psalm says nothing in that regard.

David here encourages the believer to let God be the thrill of his very inner being. The child of God should let the Lord be that which excites, motivates, and drives. The Lord should be that which causes the believer to rejoice within. Then He shall give His child the desires of his heart; that is, God will plant within the believer's heart the kind of desires he ought to have—the kind God wants him to have. God shall change the natural desires of His children to be desires for godliness and righteousness and purity and growth and service. So well knit into the hearts of believers shall these desires be that they shall become the most natural instincts of the believer who is focused upon Christ and His sufficiency.

Commit your way to the Lord. The future and welfare of the believer lies not in his own hands but in those of the Lord Himself. The believer should submit his plans and path before the Lord. He should be willing to give such ambitions up that God might be able to create something better and stronger from him. *Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him.* God alone is the one sufficient to develop a way through life for each of His people.

Those who commit their way to the Lord and trust also in Him are blessed beyond measure. *And He shall bring it to pass.* The path that He desires for the believer to walk upon is one that He shall certainly bring to pass by His own supreme will. Oh, what a beautiful picture of living by the sufficiency of God.

David lived, as it were, looking at shadows of the fullness of the kingdom. The New Testament believer, however, is now in Christ; he has seen the fulfillment of that at which David could only

hint. Even as David lived in the shadows, so does the believer of today stand right in the midst of the blazing light of Christ. The way of Christ, the manner by which he walked is even more abundantly clear and available to we upon whom the end of the ages has come (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11).

Isaiah Proclaiming God's Power for the Weak

Another great Old Testament example of living by the sufficiency of God occurs in the ministry of Isaiah as he proclaims God's power for the weak. Those who are aware of their own weakness or inadequacy are always encouraged by God's sufficiency. Isaiah addresses those who recognize such truth. And he promises strength—strength to those who admit to weakness (after all, Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light).

He gives power to the weak, even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:29-31)

Clearly, all believers qualify for this power so the question remains that concerns the reason so many Christians fail to walk by accessing the power of God. The chief problem encountered here is that these Christians do not honestly believe they are weak.

These believers need to overlook the myth that has been perpetrated upon them by the false teaching of the world. They need to see themselves as God sees them. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves" (2 Corinthians 3:5). God, through

Paul, declares that mankind is pretty weak. Fortunately, it is only the weak to whom He gives power. Those who think they are mighty have only their own supposed might upon which to draw. For a believer to qualify for the unsurpassable strength of the Lord, he must simply agree with the Lord that he is weak and unable to perform any worthy act of his own strength. In the world, such is the last thing one is supposed to do. In a worldly church, such is the last thing one is encouraged to do. But in the word of God, the truth shines free: He gives power to the weak. He increases strength. And oh, that builds hope. That builds faith. That builds expectation. That builds peace and rest in the Lord.

Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. Even the youthful resource of humanity has its limitations. Even those whose energy seems boundless and strength seems undiminished will ultimately fail and grow weary. *But those who wait on the Lord*, those who hope in the Lord, will have their expectation fulfilled. Those that continually place their trust upon the Lord, even as time passes, shall be filled to overflowing with the grace of the Lord.

But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. All strength is given to those who patiently hope in the Lord. As the believer puts his hope in the Lord, he draws upon—by faith—the sufficient resources of the true and living God. The Christian who lives by faith and hope is living by grace rather than by what strength he might muster on his own. He receives new strength from God. He shall soar above his troubles as if upon wings of eagles, looking down with God's perspective. He shall run the race of life without being overcome by weariness. The believer who rests in and trusts upon the Lord will walk step after step after step, never bowing the knee to the world and never fainting upon the road of this difficult world.

Jeremiah Giving God's Contrasting Options on Trust

In prophesying, Jeremiah only allows for two possible objects upon which man's trust can be laid: man or God.

Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited. "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit. (Jeremiah 17:5-8)

First Jeremiah speaks of the spiritual wilderness of the man who trusts upon the power of man to accomplish anything of worth or value. There is no spiritual abundance there because the sufficiency is of man there. Man is weak. Man is impotent. And man does not offer that kind of life that can bring one to know beauty and power and strength.

Jeremiah contrasts the sufficiency of man here with that which is truly worthwhile. Those who depend on the Lord, who put their expectations in the Lord, do not live as in a barren wasteland. Life in the grace of God is life in a lush garden of abundant grace. There is no anxiety. There is no fear. All needs are met—and met to overflowing.

Of the two options here, one brings a cursing and the other brings a blessing. One is trusting in man. The other is trusting in the Lord. One produces lives like shrubs in the desert in a parched wilderness. The other, trusting in the Lord, produces lives like a tree planted right into the bank of the river.

Conclusion

In conclusion, refer to Micah 7:7-9 in which Micah acknowledges his hope in God. All that we have read are examples of what believers have abundantly available to us in the new covenant of grace—God's sufficiency and abundant life. All this is found in Jesus Christ.

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
(2 Corinthians 3:5-6)